

LLYWELYN SION (1540 - 1615?), poet, farmer, at one time beadle or crier in the courts, a professional copyist by trade, and one of the most important figures in the literary life of Glamorganshire in the second half of the 16th century

Name: Llywelyn Sion
Date of birth: 1540
Date of death: 1615?
Gender: Male
Occupation: poet, farmer, at one time beadle or crier in the courts, a professional copyist by trade, and one of the most important figures in the literary life of Glamorganshire
Area of activity: Law; Literature and Writing; Nature and Agriculture; Poetry; Scholarship and Languages
Author: Thomas Oswald Phillips

Born at Llangewydd in Laleston near Bridgend. **Iolo Morganwg** used to insist that Llywelyn Siôn was the genius responsible for reducing into systematic form the 'Mysteries of the Bards of the Isle of Britain,' and that it was 'by his industry and meticulous care that the details of the Mysteries of the Bards were collected' - all of which was, of course, a figment of **Iolo's** imagination.

He owes his reputation to the fact that he was the greatest professional copyist of his time; he was not as prolific a copyist as **John Jones** (1578? - 1658?) of Gellilyfdy or **Robert Vaughan** of Hengwrt, but his MSS. are far more systematic and he has kept aloof from contemporary literary prejudices. There are thirteen of his MSS. still in existence - seven being collections of *cywyddau* and *awdlau*, one of carols (*cwndidau*), one of genealogies, and four of prose works. As a copyist his busiest period was from 1585-1595; 1595-1600 was his golden age; while 1600-1613 produced his most important works, i.e. his long, narrow books - 'The Long Book of Shrewsbury,' 'The Long Book of Llywarch Reynolds', see **Jonathan Owain Reynolds** and 'The Long Book of Llanharan.' His industry was responsible for the preservation of the works of the minor poets of Glamorgan in the second half of the 16th century, together with the poetry of other parts of Wales. It is in his handwriting, too (Llanover MS. B9), that we have the most complete collection of carols, a mine of information on the history of the *cwndid* and on the development of popular as opposed to classical forms of poetry as exemplified in Glamorgan in the 16th century. His prose MSS. are also important; his transcript of **Gruffydd Robert's** *Drych Cristnogawl* is the only surviving copy of its three parts in their entirety (Singleton MS. 1, Cardiff); in Llanover MS. B17 we have a version of 'Chwedl Seith Doethon Rufain' ('The Seven Wise Men of Rome') which is totally different from the nine other versions which have survived in various MSS; while the only Welsh copy of the 'Gesta Romanorum' is the one in his handwriting. His MSS. preserve for us the fullest picture of the active literary life of the Glamorgan of his time, and it is due to his industry that many of our literary treasures were preserved in an age which notoriously dissipated and destroyed them.

Author

Thomas Oswald Phillips

Sources

G. J. Williams, *Traddodiad Llenyddol Morgannwg* (1948), 79-80, 157-60, 177-8

G. J. Williams, *Iolo Morganwg a Chywyddau'r Ychwanegiad* (1926)

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Llywelyn Siôn](#)

Additional Links

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Published date: 1959

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